March 3, 2025

Re: LD 718

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and the distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee,

Mainers For Modern Elections would like to share our opposition to LD 718.

Mainers for Modern Elections is a non-partisan coalition of advocacy groups that believes a functioning democracy requires easy access to the ballot for eligible voters, especially for marginalized voting populations; strong voter protections; and confidence in a secure, modern, representative, and well-resourced elections system. The coalition advocates for statutorily protected voting rights, structural democracy reforms that expand voter access, and investment in and modernization of election administration and implementation. We pursue these policies through direct and grassroots advocacy and by educating and providing resources to public officials and coalition members.

LD 718 would take away a secure option for many Mainers to cast their ballot.It would also place undue burdens on many of Maine's citizens, especially seniors, rural voters and those with a disability. In 2024, 379,170 Maine citizens cast an absentee ballot. Of these voters over 45% were over the age of 65. Maine is the oldest state in the nation and growing older. Many older Mainers no longer drive or choose not to in the dark winter months. Getting out for basic needs, not to mention voting, can become increasingly difficult. The 129th Maine Legislature passed ongoing absentee voting with these voters and barriers in mind.

By implementing a 'single sign-up' process for ongoing absentee applications, election officials see an increase in predictability for planning purposes. Data from clerks across the country and from varying sizes of offices indicate that it costs between $3.50 and $10 to process a single absentee request. Based on these numbers, it was estimated that Maine will save between $450,000 and $1.3 million simply by eliminating repetitive requests year over year. 168,754 voters cast an absentee ballot in all 3 of the last even-year elections (2020, 2022 and 2024), creating year over year duplicative work for town election officials. The secure ongoing absentee voting process was designed to reduce this redundancy and increase efficiency for town election officials.

Maine citizens of all ages can face challenges to casting their ballot, getting time off from work during polling hours, missing registration deadlines and struggling to get to their polling location. Ongoing absentee voting solves all of these problems and creates an expectation for voters that they will have a

consistent and convenient voting experience every election. Repealing this secure system that builds in efficiency for Maine citizens and our hard working town clerks before it has gone into full effect would simply be wrong.

LD 718 would also prevent town clerks from issuing absentee ballots to family members who don't live in the same jurisdiction. Citizens who are casting their ballots should be able to delegate who picks up their ballot to a trusted family member. The adult daughter who lives in Wells and cares for her elderly mother in Eliot would be prohibited from picking up her mother's absentee ballot from the Eliot town clerk. These are unnecessary burdens that do nothing to improve Maine's election process.

Mainers for Modern Elections urges you to vote ought not to pass on LD 718.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Elizabeth Allen
Wells, Maine

Members of the Mainers for Modern Elections Coalition include:

- ACLU of Maine
- AARP of Maine
- Center for Secure and Modern Elections
- Common Cause
- Defend Our Health
- Gateway Community Services
- League of Women Voters of Maine
- Maine AFL-CIO
- Maine Citizens for Clean Elections
- Maine Conservation Voters
- Maine Equal Justice
- Maine Immigrant Rights Coalition
- Maine People's Alliance
- Maine SEA, SEIU Local 1989
- Maine Women's Lobby
- Maine Youth Power
- Planned Parenthood of Northern New England
- RepresentUs